

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SINGAP 00117 100634Z

13/61

ACTION OES-04

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 AID-05 CEQ-01 CIAE-00 COA-01

COME-00 EB-07 EPA-01 INR-07 IO-10 L-02 NSF-01 NSC-05

NSAE-00 PM-03 RSC-01 SS-15 SP-02 FEA-01 DLOS-03 PA-01

USIA-06 PRS-01 CG-00 DOTE-00 INT-05 SMI-01 /090 W

----- 115277

R 090930Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1803

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY TOIYO

CNO WASHDC

CINCPAC FLEET MAKALPA

CINCPAC HON HI

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 0117

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PLOS EWWT SENV TGEN SN

SUBJ: OIL LEAKAGE FROM JAPANESE TANKER IN SINGAPORE STRAITS

REF: A. CABLE FROM SMITHSONIAN OBSERVATORY, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.,

DATED 1*7/75

B. TOKYO 0224

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SUMMARY. JAPANESE SUPERTANKER SHOWA MARU RAN AGROUND IN SINGAPORE STRAIT JAN 6 CAUSE OIL SPILL OF AT LEAST 3,300 TONS).

PORT OF SINGAPORE AUTHORITY (PSA) COORDINATING DISPERSAL OF OIL SLICK AND CLEAN-UP OPERATIONS. ALTHOUGH PSA CONFIDENT THAT
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PAGE 02 SINGAP 00117 100634Z

POLLUTION THREAT TO SINGAPORE'S WESTERN SHORES ABATING, GOS TASK

FORCE REMAINS ON ALERT . THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT OIL SLICK HAS ALREADY ADVERSELY AFFECTED MARINE LIFE IN LOCAL WATERS. ACCORDING TO MFA, ACCIDENT WILL NOT AFFECT GOS POSITION FAVORING UNIMPEDED PASSAGE OF INTERNATIONAL STRAITS. END CONFIDENTIAL.

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED.

1. JAPANESE SUPERTANKER, SHOWA MARU, OWNED BY TACHEIYO KAIUN, RAN AGROUND IN SINGAPORE STRAIT AT 5:40 A.M. MONDAY JAN 6 APPROXIMATELY 1.4 KILOMETERS WEST BUFFALO ROCK APPROXIMATELY 103 DEGREES, 48 NINUTES, 42 SECONDS EAST LONGITUDE, AND 01 DEGREE, 09 MINUTES, 24 SECONDS NORTH LATITUDE. LOCATION OF ACCIDENT CLOSER INDONESIAN THAN SINGAPORE WATERS AND MAY IN FACT HAVE OCCURED IN INDONESIAN WATERS. INDONESIAN-PLACED BUOY IS IN VICINITY. FOLLOWING INFORMATION ON ENSUING OIL SPILL REPORTED IS PRELIMINARY AND NOT ALL FACTS HAVE BEEN CONFIRMED.

2. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS DAMAGE TO TANKER CARRYING 224,088 TONS CRUDE OIL RESULTED IN SPILL OF AT LEAST 3,300 TONS (APPROX 900,000 GALLONS). LEAKAGE REPORTED BY PRESS TO HAVE BEEN STOPPED BY EARLY AFTERNOON JAN 7, BUT COAST GUARD OFFICE AT EMBASSY RECEIVED REPORTS OIL STILL LEAKING ON MORNING OF JAN 8. CAUSE OF ACCIDENT NOT YET KNOWN. HOWEVER, IT APPEARS FROM CIRCUMSTANCES REPORTED, ACCIDENT HAPPENED THROUGH NAVIGATIONAL ERROR. TANKER HAD BEEN PROCEEDING DIRECTLY THROUGH STRAIT UNDER OWN POWER AND WAS NOT CALLING AT SINGAPORE.

3. SPILL RESULTED IN SLICK 1.5 MILES LONG BY MORNING OF JAN 7. SLICK HAD LENGTHENED TO 10 MILES BY EARLY EVENING JAN 7, THREATENING POLLUTION DAMAGE TO SINGAPORE'S WESTERN SHORE RANGING FROM LOWER JURONG HARBOR TO SENTOSA ISLAND INCLUDING KEIPE HARBOR, PORT OF SINGAPORE AUTHORITY COORDINATING CLEAN-UP OPERATIONS WITH COOPERATION SINGAPORE'S OIL REFINERIES. TOTAL OF NINE VESSELS (4 PSA AND 5 OIL REFINERY) ENGAGED IN SPRAYING CHEMICAL DETERGENTS TO DISPERSE OIL SLICK. TWENTY SINGAPORE MARITIME COMMAND VESSELS (MOSTLY SMALL CRAFT AUGMENTED BY MANPOWER FROM THE MIN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT HAVE BEEN DEPLOYED TO ARREST SLICK IN SHALLOW WATER. MIN OF ENVIRONMENT HAS PLACED TASK FORCE ON ALERT TO PREPARE FOR MAJOR MOPPING-UP OPERATIONS IF SLICK HITS SINGAPORE SHORES. SELCO (S) PTE. LTD., LOCAL SALVAGE FIRM, CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 SINGAP 00117 100634Z

ATTEMPTING REFLOAT TANKER, WHICH BADLY DAMAGED ON BOTTOM MIDSECTION. THREE OF 12 TANKS DAMAGED AND EFFORTS UNDER-WAY TO TRANSFER OIL IN REMAINING TANKS TO AN ESSO TANKER. REPRESENTATIVES OF OWNERS OF TANKER ARRIVED YESTERDAY TO SURVEY DAMAGE AND INVESTIGATE CAUSE OF ACCIDENT. JAPANESE TRANSPORT MINISTRY HAS SENT TEAM OF SENIOR OFFICIALS TO INVESTIGATE ACCIDENT AND STUDY COMPENSATION.

4. BOTH SINGAPORE DAILIES GIVING OIL SPILL HEAVY FRONT PAGE PLAY

STRESSING SEVERITY OF THREAT TO SINGAPORE COASTLINE. IN CONTRAST, PSA RELATIONS OFFICIAL IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF MINIMIZED POSSIBILITY OF SLICK REACHING COASTAL HARBOR AREAS. ALTHOUGH EMBOFF REFRAINED FROM MENTIONING ANY CONNECTION BETWEEN OIL-SPILL AND POSSIBLE IMPACT ON GOS POSITION ONLOS ISSUES, PSA OFFICIAL VOLUNTEERED GOS'S DESIRE TO CONTINUE SUPPORT PRINCIPLE OF UNRESTRICTED PASSAGE THROUGH THE STRAITS.

5. IN SPITE OF PSA OFFICIAL'S REAFFIRMATION OF GOS POSITION ON UNRESTRICTED PASSAGE, THERE HAS BEEN SOME SPECULATION IN LOCAL PRESS AND WIRE SERVICE REPORTS FROM TOKYO QUOTING SEVERAL JAPANESE OIL AND SHIPPING COMPANY OFFICIALS TO EFFECT THAT THE INCIDENT MAY LEAD INDONESIA, MALAYSIA, AND SINGAPORE TO TIGHTEN RULES ON USE OF MALACCA STRAITS BY TANKERS BRINGING OIL TO JAPAN.

END UNCLASSIFIED.

6. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL. IN DISCUSSION JANUARY 9 WITH DCM, DEPUTY SECRETARY FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS TAN BOON SENG SAID QUITE CATEGORICALLY THAT WHILE ACCIDENT WAS UNFORTUNATE IT WOULD NOT AFFECT GOS POSITION FAVORING UNINPEDED PASSAGE OF INTERNATIONAL STRAITS. HE SAID THERE HAD BEEN SOME OIL SPILLS IN THE PAST AND THAT INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT HAD OFTEN REFERRED TO THESE PRECIOUS INCIDENTS IN EFFORT TO ALTER GOS POSITION. HOWEVER, GOS POSITION HAD REMAINED UNSHAKEN.

7 COMMENT: FROM TAN'S COMMENTS, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THIS ACCIDENT WILL NOT AFFECT GOS' LOS POSITION ON INTERNATIONAL STRAITS, HOWEVER, IF INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA EXERT STRONG PRESSURE, IT COULD CAUSE GOS (POSSIBLY IN CONJUNCTION WITH MALAYSIAN AND INDONESIAN GOVERNMENTS TO REVIEW AND POSSIBLY TIGHTEN TRAFFIC REGULATION PROCEDUES AND ACCIDENT PREVENTION MEASURES.

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PAGE 04 SINGAP 00117 100634Z

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8. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. REQUEST DEPARTMENT PASS ABOVE UNCLASSIFIED INFORMATION TO ROBERT CIRON AT SMITHSONIAN OBSERVATORY, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, AS REQUESTED REFTEL A. REFTEL A PASSED AS REQUESTED TO PROFESSOR JOHNSON AT NANYANG UNIVERSITY. PROFESSOR JOHNSON WILL ATTEMPT PROVIDE INFORMATION AT LATER DATE ON SCIENTISTS WHO STUDY EFFECTS OF SPILL AND DAMAGE TO WILDLIFE. CRONK

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Message Attributes

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